

Illinois Department on Aging Solutions Event
Older Americans Act Reauthorization
Wednesday, July 6, 2005
Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Springfield, Illinois

Record of Attendance

45 persons signed the registration form as attending the event.

Sponsoring Organizations

The Illinois Department on Aging and the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging sponsored the event.

Contact Name

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Call to Order

Kelly Cunningham, Manager of the Division of Home and Community Services with the Illinois Department on Aging called the event to order at 9:00 a.m. She thanked the Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging for being a co-sponsor of the event. She also recognized Kathy Smith who was the CART reporter and produced the text of the Solutions Event which served as a rough draft for the Summary report.

Kelly introduced the Listening Panel for the event: Michael Gelder, Deputy Director, Illinois Department on Aging and served as the Listening Panel Chairman; Donna Ginther, Manager of State Affairs, AARP Illinois Legislative Office; and Naomi Fowler, Assistant Secretary, Illinois Council on Aging.

Opening Statement

Michael Gelder presented opening remarks on behalf of the Illinois Department on Aging. He welcomed everyone and stated that the purpose of the White House Conference on Aging is to make policy recommendations to the President and Congress which will help guide national aging policy over the next decade and beyond. The number of seniors age 65 or older is expected to double in size by 2030. We have 78 million baby boomers that will begin turning 60 in 2006. Today, seventy percent of Americans will celebrate a 65th birthday. This makes it essential that we focus on the aging of today and tomorrow to ensure that our state and nation are prepared to

address the challenges and opportunities that accompany them. This event today is very important because it allows you, the public, to provide input concerning the older population and the effects on their quality of life. The testimony that you provide today will be submitted to the White House Conference on Aging Policy Committee.

Joy Paeth, President, Illinois Association of Area Agencies on Aging (I4A), addressed the need to build the base of support and strengthen today's system of supportive services to enable older persons and boomers to age in their homes and communities. I4A supports increase funding of the Older Americans Act (OAA) and the establishment of a new title to the OAA which would support AAAs aging programs to assist county and city governments across the nation to proactively prepare for the aging of the boomers. She called for increase funding under the OAA to keep pace with growth of older persons and family caregivers. She called for more partnerships between the Administration on Aging and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid to address the needs of older persons with disabilities.

Julie Gowan, board member, East Central Illinois Area Agency on Aging, Inc., addressed the need to expand public and private resources at every level to serve seniors today and prepare for the boomers of tomorrow. Increase federal authorization levels for Older Americans Act programs to enhance home and community-based services. She recommends helping communities prepare to meet the demographic challenges ahead by adding a new title to the OAA that would focus on developing the programs, policies and services needed to address the aging of the baby boomers and increase the longevity of the current older population. She recommends a new title that will permanently establish Aging and Disability Resource Centers within every service area in the nation. She calls for strengthening the Aging Network's Role in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention with an authorization level of \$50 million for the Title III-D program and propose that \$10 million of the appropriation be set aside to pilot through the area agencies on aging.

Janet Ellis, Executive Director, Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging, states the Older Americans Act needs authorization and appropriation levels increased. She strongly agrees with the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging recommendation of a 25% increase in OAA funding. She addressed the support of a new Title VIII to provide support to state units on aging and area agencies on aging to assist counties, cities, and communities in addressing their aging population. She supports increase funding for the family caregiver program. She recommends maximizing flexibility for local service delivery and reduce administration burden e.g., a unified Title III-C for meals and that Title VII should be reviewed in relation to the Elder Justice Act.

Deborah Kuiken, Executive Director, Midland Area Agency on Aging, recommends the following: 1) Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act. Additional funding is needed for the following services: rural transportation, home delivered meals, case management, chore/homemaker services, and mental health services for older adults; 2) Economic Security including Social Security and Health Care. Social Security Trust Fund should be used to pay benefits and not for other purposes. All employed persons should pay into Social Security and government should not have access to the trust fund. Raise or eliminate the cap on Social

Security payroll tax and the federal government must repay all monies borrowed from the trust fund. Convene a group of non-partisan professionals to study options and provide unbiased recommendations for a long term solution. Income tax received which is derived from Social Security benefits should be directed to the trust fund. Also allow workers to invest a portion of the Social Security payroll tax into private accounts; and, 3) Housing along the Lifespan.

Bill Kempiners, Executive Director, Illinois Health Care Association, addressed Health and Long-Term Living. There needs to be a strong Long-Term Care Policy developed to meet the needs of the nation's rapidly growing older population. A giant first step was the passage of the Older Adult Services Act. There also needs to be a broader definition of long-term care not just associated with nursing homes, but to include the whole array of services allowing seniors to continue to live healthy, socially productive lives. He recommends that funding must include state and federal funds, as well as long term care insurance and other private markets. There needs to be better communication and coordination between and among programs. He calls on educating seniors on programs available and include educating the younger citizen about programs early and provide incentives for purchasing long-term care insurance. And finally do not ignore the important roles that nursing home play in caring for the frailest of the frail elderly.

Brian Schwarberg, Director of Public Policy, Greater Illinois Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, discussed issues that are important to persons with dementia and their caregivers nationwide. He called for expanding and promoting home and community-based options for people with Alzheimer's Disease. Provide quality training for dementia care personnel in the home, the community, and licensed care facilities. It was recommended the Alzheimer's Association seek to ensure essential protections and opportunities for people with dementia including plan for their long term care needs, purchase of long term care insurance, and accessibility of the full range of dementia care options. He requests additional funding to increase Alzheimer's Disease research.

Jane Angelis, Ph. D., Director, Intergenerational Initiative and Editor, Continuance Magazine, Southern Illinois University Carbondale, states generations need to be more connected so they can find little ways to help each other. We must emphasize the value of individuals by tapping their skills from the earliest years until the last moments of life. The connectedness of education and retirement is clearly a direction with extraordinary potential. Recommendations on the Interdependence of Generations calls on the need to engage older and younger generations jointly as participants, planners, and organizers of volunteer systems. We need to do a better job of publicizing the successes of connecting the generations and describe "what's in it for me" for communities, business, and the aging network. She recommends reintegrating older citizens into the productive mainstream of society and redefining retirement. Higher education must consider the aging world and the knowledge essential to a workforce with a greater representation of older clients.

Frank Price, AARP State Legislative Team, stated AARP believes that our nation's public policies should permit people to plan and live empowered lives. That belief drives AARP's thinking how best to ensure economic and health security, as well as how to best provide needed

social services. He calls for expanding available settings for Long Term Care and allowing consumers the option to live at home in chosen communities and receive care whenever possible. A livable community actively promotes the inclusion of residents in its social and economic life through the physical features, programs and readily accessible services that enable older residents and people with disabilities to remain independent and actively engage in community life. This requires diverse and affordable housing options for households of different income levels, increased use of universal design features, and improving transportation services. Publicly-sponsored health promotion programs should study and take into account the methods and types of health promotions and interventions that will maximize and sustain healthy opportunities and outcomes of people 50+. Reauthorization of the Older Americans Act will be critical to our nation's safety net. We recommend strengthening provisions to increase access to Legal Assistance to the Elderly, retaining emphasis on services to frail and low-income and minority elders, establishing adequate authorization and appropriations levels, and ensuring continued viability of the National Family Caregiver Support Program.

Becky Johnson, R.N., Manager, Continuing Care Services, St. Mary's Hospital, Streater, states that the majority of our Community Care Program (CCP) clients are funded by state funds to attend adult day services. The service is staffed for a 20 client capacity. On average, there are about 15 clients per day. Due to the requirement that CCP client days must be held in their absence, we are unable to maintain full capacity. Many seniors, including CCP clients experience illness, inability to attend in inclement weather, hospitalization, and long visits with family members. Each day a CCP client attends the Adult Day Service their days cannot be replaced by another individual for 60 days following that day. This results in many unused days. These days could benefit other CCP clients by attending additional days without jeopardizing the funding. If each CCP client was approved with an additional 2 "as needed" days per month, the Adult Day Service could substitute another client of the same pay source and maintain full capacity. This is a "win/win" solution for the client and service.

Karen Schainker, President of the Association of Illinois Senior Centers, stated senior centers are the one entity in the aging network uniquely positioned to assist seniors of all ages and economic levels in maintaining their independence. She noted that senior centers coordinate a variety of services and opportunities for seniors, which impact all the issue areas on the agenda for the 2005 WHCOA. She stated that senior centers should be elevated to a prominent position with direct funding to promote mental and physical wellness. She made the following recommendations: 1) provide specific funding for the operation of senior centers; and 2) recognize senior centers within the aging network as the entities already in place and positioned to build an even stronger foundation for home and community-based services.

Malinda Duncan, Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, Inc., **Judy Donath**, Senior Services of Central Illinois, both spoke on behalf of Foster Grandparent Program Directors, Retired Senior Volunteer Program Directors, and Senior Companion Program Directors. They noted that 77 million aging baby-boomers are our only increasing natural resource. They recommended that America harness the energy of this massive boomer generation to meet the pressing needs of our children and frail elders in our communities. Last

year, 470,000 RSVP volunteers provided 78 million hours of community service; Foster Grandparents provided 28 million hours of service to 264,000 children with special needs; and, Senior Companions provided 14 million hours of service to 58,000 frail elders. They recommended that the 2005 WHCOA policy resolutions include the national senior volunteer programs to engage baby boomers in volunteer service. They recommended increasing federal funding to establish all three senior volunteer programs in un-served areas and expand these programs to every county in the country.

Susan Vega, National Council of La Raza Program Coordinator, Alivio Medical Center, Chicago, states a number of seniors in their community are not aware of the many programs available to them. She said that many of the people in the community are immigrants facing communication barriers. She recommends that the state strongly advocate for resources to meet the needs of communities where English is not the first language of many of the older residents. She also encourages the state to advocate for enough resources to reach out to the large number of people with limited incomes that could benefit from the Medicare Savings Programs and programs that help pay for medication.

M. Jessie Smith, senior, states that Medicare should pay for teeth, eye glasses and hearing aids. She discussed how hearing aids are one of the single most expensive “necessary” items an older person will buy. She would like help in being able to buy and/or bring down the cost of hearing aids. She states that government should spend money on educating people on a healthy lifestyle rather than paying for their medicine.

Kathy Thomas, advocate, states that there is nothing wrong with graying hair and extra wrinkles. Wisdom and life experiences from the elderly need to be valued, honored and respected. We are living longer than ever before and a healthy lifestyle from cradle to grave is imperative if we are to enjoy the longevity given to us. She states that a healthy lifestyle starts young. It involves not only eating right and exercising but also an attitude style. An attitude about the potential for life’s enjoyments and pleasure. And part of that enjoyment and pleasure is enjoying the wisdom and joy that comes from aging gracefully.

Closing Comments

The members of the panel thanked the participants for their testimony and wonderful comments and concerns.

Adjournment

The Solutions Event was adjourned at 11:20 a.m.